

Church of the Holy Spirit, San Antonio, Texas Report on 2011 Pre-campaign Feasibility Survey July 2011

As representatives of the Capital Campaign Division of the Stewardship Department of the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas, we would like to thank you for your hospitality while we conducted the pre-campaign survey at Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit San Antonio. Our interview dates were Saturday, May 21, 2011, Sunday, May 22, 2011 and Wednesday, May 25, 2011. Serving as diocesan consultants, Ted Burkhart, Kirk Mason and Nancy Stinson interviewed a total of 57 families representing approximately 57% of the congregation (100 potential pledging units). Additionally, one phone interview was completed June 20, 2011, and 25 mail-in surveys were distributed with four returned, bringing the total interviewed to 62% of the congregation. We have summarized the most frequent answers to the questions on the pre-campaign survey in our comments below.

Our sample base included 11 families (18%) originally from St. Michael's and indicated years of membership ranging from less than one year to over 20 years (founding members St. Michael's) and 30 years (founding members Holy Spirit) with 55% of the surveys from members who have been here six or fewer years. These people represented virtually all the ministries and activities at Church of the Holy Spirit San Antonio.

The respondents all portray the congregation as "friendly and welcoming," but more than just friendliness, they said there was a genuine family atmosphere that is relaxed, nurturing and non-judgmental. Visitors find the congregation easy to fit into; with some interviewees saying, "one visit was enough to know they would stay." A place where hugs come easily and everyone is willing to act as loving "parents" for the growing number of children. A "small church with big plans," Church of the Holy Spirit has truly grown where they were planted becoming adaptive, dynamic and diverse yet through it all remaining interactive and happy, inviting new members into this caring environment. With these temporary facilities all have discovered that "worship is about people and not the building." In general, Church of the Holy Spirit is a place of comfort and peace, with a praying family that loves and supports one another.

The strengths of the congregation are many and varied. Some have said its "character has been tested and built by fire," and that the congregation is experiencing a "rebirth" as Church of the Holy Spirit and St. Michael's continue to merge into a stronger, more vibrant group with everyone willing to step forward, become involved, and lead when needed. Today, Church of the Holy Spirit is a spiritual congregation, prayerfully centered, dedicated to God, and supported by committed Christians loving the Lord and doing His will. The youth program is also becoming strong and vibrant including the unique greeter program for young visitors. That, coupled with the "precious" nursery facilities, the New Member Ministry Team and the Newcomer 101 and 102 classes, has created an open invitation to join this family with a rousing "Welcome Home!"

The weaknesses described were very specific. First and foremost were the shortcomings necessitated by a temporary location – limited classrooms slowing the growth of children, youth

and adult education programs, only one worship service, fellowship/coffee in the sanctuary space, and a location hidden from view without signage. Although the congregation is growing, there is still a concern that a more concentrated effort on engaging more young families is needed. Most interviewees feel the people of Church of the Holy Spirit and St. Michael's are melding and becoming stronger in the process, but a few sense that the merger is not complete. Continued awareness and sensitivity is recommended. There is a generalization that St. Michael's worship services were less formal with PowerPoint, overhead songs and praise music, while Holy Spirit's services were more formal with traditional hymns. All acknowledged leadership's extensive time spent blending these styles into a unique worship service. Most feel the compromises made were successful.

The congregation is blessed with an "awesome" vicar who has given new life and hope to this church family. Jason Roberts is a real asset. He is energetic and committed, approachable and visionary, spiritual and creative, funny, gregarious and *never* boring. As a great communicator, he is willing to listen, responds honestly, and allows one to disagree. All recognize that Jason deserves accolades for blending together two groups who are becoming unified and happy to rally around the new Church of the Holy Spirit's vision and mission. He pulls, pushes, and encourages new leaders challenging them to reach their potential; and with the lay leadership he is building a great atmosphere of welcome, generating excitement, while leading the congregation as a whole toward change. But we all know this, right? The most mentioned attribute, what people liked to tell us about, was his preaching. Jason's sermons are described as down-to-earth, gripping, attention catching and informative. Each sermon speaks of real things; it makes sense and appeals to a broad range of ages and cultures. The greatest compliment might be that, "teenagers really listen to his sermons."

The equally talented, positive lay leadership are described as, "responsible, committed, faithful, passionate, dedicated, and hard working." They are also flexible, adaptive, and not territorial rather drawing out new volunteers and inviting them in. Many have served on the Bishop's Committee multiple times, yet the mix between organizers and people who think sentimentally remains in place. Always interacting with the congregation, leadership has diffused tense situations, adjusted to changes and revamped when needed. As one interviewee said, "I am very impressed that in a congregation this small there is the quality [and quantity] of leadership to include Bishop's Committee, Sacred Space Team, Welcoming Committee, Music, etc."

The most important thing the G.R.O.W. campaign leadership has done is to communicate the vision and the potential of the Bandera location. Of course everyone is aware of the plans and almost all feel the excellent design meets the needs of the congregation now and will support growth in the future. The name "Sacred Space" has become the mindset of the people toward their new home. This congregation is focused on creating a sacred space for Church of the Holy Spirit and all who visit. The people attending the May 8th Overland Partners presentation were impressed with Rick Archer's thoroughness and reverent explanation. The activities have created a high degree of excitement in the congregation and anxiousness to leave the nomadic life and finally come home.

There was an overwhelming response in favor of moving forward with only a few unable to financially support the campaign. However, the majority of the congregation will be contributing monthly from their operating funds, not from savings or other financial reserves.

Although often very small amounts, this indicates a higher degree of sacrificial giving. It does not appear these gifts will affect the church's level of annual giving. Each respondent was asked to identify what amount he/she would be willing to give in a lump sum or over a three-year period. It was emphasized that there was no pledge or commitment at this time, but that their answers were important in helping make a more accurate estimate of the giving capacity of the congregation. Fifty-one of the 62 families (82% of those interviewed) indicated they would financially support the project. Giving estimates ranged from \$360 to \$100,000 totaling approximately \$360,000. Respondents felt most comfortable giving over a three-year period with available funds spread equally over that period.

It should be emphasized that all those we interviewed still need structured communication on the funds available, past expenses incurred, and future cost justifications. There are those who believe the original UTSA Blvd property sale of almost \$3.2 million should be sufficient to complete construction without additional funding. To answer their question of, "Where have the funds gone?" perhaps a summary of how the funds have been used should be articulated again.

The 6676 Fund Endowment was established out of the "first fruits" of the sale of the UTSA property, followed by the purchase of the three (3) parcels on Bandera Road at a cost of approximately \$1.2 million. This left a little over \$1.8 million for the Phase I construction estimate of \$2.4 million. Since then, \$168,000 has been expended for items in the construction budget and \$82,100 has been withdrawn for operating expenses leaving a balance of \$1.575 million.

The expected sources of all funding necessary to reach the \$2.4 million goal, be it from the capital campaign or short-term and long-term loans, should be clarified while remembering the potential contribution for the St. Michael's property. This detailed accounting, including draws for current operating expenses, would be helpful to improve perceived transparency.

Respondents felt the best way to encourage people to participate in the campaign is to continue to communicate the progress through all media forms, and, of course, to pray. A special prayer might be included in the Prayers of the People until the campaign is complete. It is important to keep the people involved and taking more ownership. Many suggested smaller fundraisers with broad participation such as concerts on the property, silent auctions, craft shows, selling on-line, carnivals, spaghetti dinners, and garage sales to keep enthusiasm "snowballing." Others suggested scheduled visits to the property, and a separate appeal for smaller items needed such as altar hangings, prayer books, pews, and altar settings.

Other comments or suggestions included the hope that the youth space would be a first priority, and that the congregation can refocus attention on developing more outreach ministries. At the new facilities, there is hope from some for chairs with kneelers, a community garden, plus a reminder to be mindful of accessibility issues. To alleviate the need for multiple books during worship, one parishioner recommended each Sunday's service is accessible digitally in PDF format for download into personal portable devices.

A few names of potential contributors from outside the church were suggested. For confidentiality, these names will be supplied to the committee under separate cover if desired. At that time the committee can determine the feasibility of contacting them to participate.